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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KUWAIT 000563

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

NEA/REA FOR CHUCK LAWSON, OES/IHA FOR REBECCA DALEY

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [AMED](#) [CASC](#) [KSCA](#) [SENV](#) [TBIO](#) [PREL](#) [KFLU](#) [KU](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: UPDATE: KUWAIT JOINT STATE-DOD GROUP ADDRESSES
KUWAIT-IRAQ BORDER CROSSING AND AVIAN FLU

REF: A. KUWAIT 4964
[B](#). KUWAIT 5114
[C](#). 05 KUWAIT 4673
[D](#). BAGHDAD 254

[1](#)1. (U) SUMMARY AND COMMENT: On February 14, the joint State-DOD Avian Influenza (AI) working group (Refs A & B) met to discuss the latest developments in the ongoing dialogue with GOK Public Authority for Agriculture and Fish Resources (PAAFR) officials regarding Kuwaiti concerns about the potential for U.S. convoys returning from Iraq to spread AI to Kuwait. According to PAAFR officials, Kuwait will begin constructing a roll-through decontamination trough the week of February 20 for vehicles at the civilian crossing. The Coalition Forces Land Component Command (CFLCC) has prepared plans for several decontamination scenarios, but will wait for an official request from the Kuwaiti Ministry of Defense (KMOD) before acting, as under the terms of the Defense Cooperation Agreement (DCA). At CFLCC's request, Post informed the PAAFR that an official request from KMOD will be necessary. A pandemic influenza (PI) expert from CFLCC will arrive in Kuwait in the coming weeks, and Post will enjoin him in a meeting with PAAFR, thereafter.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Given the logistical challenge of implementing the PAAFR's request, Post has argued against taking action on the grounds that disinfecting tires appears to hold no certain scientific value and could be ineffective in combating the spread of the AI virus. CFLCC also is not convinced that the science supports such a move and that setting a precedent in this area may divert resources from other measures that could be more effective when dealing with AI. However, PAAFR officials have insisted on decontamination measures. In order to counter the risk of the GOK either taking over Coalition Crossing to perform decontamination, or closing the border altogether, CFLCC has agreed to begin some measures once the logistics can be worked out. CFLCC is capable of beginning decontamination now, although both Post and CFLCC are hoping to allay GOK concerns without making substantial resource commitments. END SUMMARY AND COMMENT

[1](#)3. (U) On February 14, the joint State-DOD AI working group (Refs A & B) met to discuss the request by Kuwaiti animal health officials that U.S. military convoys crossing into Kuwait from Iraq be disinfected. The initial request was made by Dr. Mohammad Al-Muhanna, Deputy Director of Animal Resources at the Public Authority for Agriculture and Fish Resources (PAAFR), at a meeting on October 31, 2005 (Ref C), and repeated at a follow-up meeting on January 22, 2006; U.S. military medical officials from CFLCC attended both meetings. The January 22 meeting was also attended by Director of Animal Resources Dr. Farida Al-Mulla, whose presence

testified to the importance that the issue carries for the Kuwaitis.

¶4. (U) At the January 22 meeting, Drs. Al-Muhanna and Al-Mulla noted their concern that, with AI now present in northern Iraq (Ref D), the virus may already be widespread throughout that country but heretofore undetected by Iraq's under-resourced public health infrastructure. Particularly, they expressed concern about the virus entering Kuwait on the tires of U.S. military and contractors' vehicles. Decontamination, they said, could be accomplished either by spraying the tires with disinfectant or by constructing a roll-through trough.

¶5. (U) After that January 22 meeting, Post cleared a Memorandum of Meeting with CFLCC stating that CFLCC would prepare contingency plans for border decontamination, and would be prepared to deploy no later than February 15. Since that time, the joint State-DoD working group has met to discuss CFLCC's proposed decontamination plans and how best to approach the GOK. Post shares CFLCC's concerns that initiating decontamination at the border is an enormous logistical and financial undertaking as up to 1000 trucks per day make the crossing into Kuwait.

¶6. (U) On February 14, ESTHoff spoke with Dr. Al-Mulla who stated that Kuwait will begin constructing a roll-through trough at the civilian border crossing within the next week. She also stated that the GOK might build a trough for the U.S. military at Coalition Crossing. In a subsequent conversation, ESTHoff conveyed the CFLCC message that an official request from KMOD will be necessary before CFLCC could begin decontamination.

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¶7. (SBU) Next Steps: CFLCC will meet with KMOD on or about March 8 to discuss the anticipated request from the PAAFR. In the meantime, in order to have U.S. concerns about the potential complexity of the eventual decontamination effort addressed, CFLCC will communicate through back-channels with KMOD before the official KMOD request is presented to CFLCC. A CFLCC expert on PI, expected to arrive in Kuwait in the next few weeks, will accompany Emboffs to meet with PAAFR officials to again argue against decontamination at the border.

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